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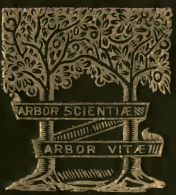

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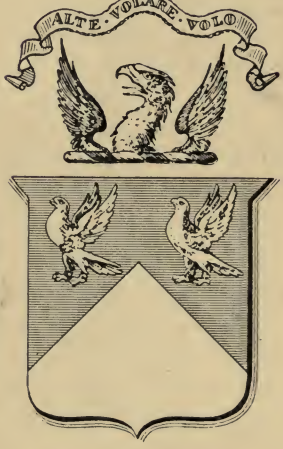

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VERSES WRITTEN IN INDIA.

Third Edition.

VERSES WRITTEN IN INDIA.

BY

SIR ALFRED LYALL.

LONDON:
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I.

THE OLD PINDAREE.

On the Nerbada, 1866.

ALLAH is great, my children, and kind to a
slave like me;
The great man's tent is gone from under the
peepul tree;
With his horde of hungry retainers, and oil-
fed sons of the quill;
I paid them the bribes they wanted, and
Satan may settle my bill.

It's not that I care for the money, or expect
a dog to be clean,
If I were lord of the ryots, they'd starve ere
I grew lean;

But I'd sooner be robbed by a tall man who showed me a yard of steel,
Than be fleeced by a sneaking Baboo, with a belted knave at his heel.

There goes my lord the Feringhee, who talks so civil and bland,
Till he raves like a soul in Jehannum if I don't quite understand;
He begins by calling me Sáhib, and ends by calling me Fool;
He has taken my old sword from me, and tells me to set up a school;

Set up a school in the village! "And my wishes are," says he,
"That you make the boys learn reg'lar, or you'll get a lesson from me;"
Well, Ramlal the oilman spites me, and pounded my cow last rains;

He's got three greasy young urchins; I'll see
that *they* take pains.

Then comes a Settlement Hákim, to teach
us to plough and to weed,
(I sowed the cotton he gave me, but first I
boiled the seed)
He likes us humble farmers, and speaks so
gracious and wise
As he asks of our manners and customs; I
tell him a parcel of lies.

"Look," says the school Feringhee, "what a
silly old man you be,
"You can't read, write, nor cypher, and your
grandsons do all three;
"They'll total the shopman's figures, and
reckon the tenant's corn,
"And read good books about London and
the world before you were born."

Well, I may be old and foolish, for I've
seventy years well told,
And the Franks have ruled me forty, so my
heart and my hand's got cold;
Good boys they are, my grandsons, I know,
but they'll never be men,
Such as I was at twenty-five when the sword
was king of the pen;

When I rode a Dekhani charger, with the
saddle-cloth gold-laced,
And a Persian sword, and a twelve foot
spear, and a pistol at my waist;
My son! He keeps a pony, and I grin to see
him astride,
Jogging away to the market, and swaying
from side to side.

My father was an Afghán, and came from
Kandahar:

He rode with Nawáb Amir Khan in the old
Maratha war:
From the Dekhan to the Himalay, five
hundred of one clan,
They asked no leave of prince or chief as
they swept thro' Hindusthan;

My mother was a Brahminee, but she clave
to my father well;
She was saved from the sack of Juleysur,
when a thousand Hindus fell;
Her kinsmen died in the sally; so she fol-
lowed where he went,
And lived like a bold Pathán in the shade of
a rider's tent.

It's many a year gone by now; and yet I
often dream
Of a long dark march to the Jumna, of
splashing across the stream,

Of the waning moon on the water, and the
spears in the dim star-light,
As I rode in front of my mother, and
wondered at all the sight.

Then, the streak of the pearly dawn—the
flash of a sentinel's gun,
The gallop and glint of horsemen who
wheeled in the level sun,
The shots in the clear still morning, the white
smoke's eddying wreath,
Is this the same land that I live in, the dull
dank air that I breathe?

But the British chased Amir Khan, and the
roving times must cease,
My father got this village, and he sowed his
crops in peace;
And I, so young and hot of blood, I had no
land or wife,

So I took to the hills of Malwa, and the free
Pindáree life.

Praise to the name Almighty! there is no
God but one!
Mahomed is his prophet, and his will shall
ever be done;
Ye shall take no use for your money, nor
your faith for a ransom sell;
Ye shall make no terms with the infidel, but
smite his soul to hell.

Tell me, ye men of Islam, who are rotting in
shameful ease,
Who wrangle before the Feringhee for a
poor man's last rupees,
Are ye better than were your fathers, who
plundered with old Cheetoo,
And who fleeced the greedy traders, as the
traders now fleece you?

Yes, and here's one of them coming, my
father gave him a bill;
I have paid the man twice over, and here I'm
paying him still;
He shows me a long stamp-paper, and must
have my land, must he?
If I were twenty year younger he'd get six
feet by three.

And if I were forty years younger, with my
life before me to choose,
I wouldn't be lectured by Káfirs, or bullied
by fat Hindoos;
But I'd go to some far-off country where
Musalmáns still are men,
Or take to the jungle, like Cheetoo, and die
in the tiger's den.

II.

THEOLOGY IN EXTREMIS:

Or a soliloquy that may have been delivered in India, June, 1857.

"They would have spared life to any of their English prisoners who should consent to profess Mahometanism, by repeating the usual short formula; but only one half-caste cared to save himself in that way."—*Extract from an Indian newspaper.*

MORITURUS LOQUITUR.

OFT in the pleasant summer years,
Reading the tales of days bygone,
I have mused on the story of human tears,
All that man unto man has done,
Massacre, torture, and black despair;
Reading it all in my easy-chair.

Passionate prayer for a minute's life;
Tortured crying for death as rest;
Husband pleading for child or wife,
Pitiless stroke upon tender breast.
Was it all real as that I lay there
Lazily stretched on my easy-chair?

Could I believe in those hard old times,
Here in this safe luxurious age?
Were the horrors invented to season rhymes,
Or truly is man so fierce in his rage?
What could I suffer, and what could I dare?
I who was bred to that easy-chair.

They were my fathers, the men of yore,
Little they recked of a cruel death;
They would dip their hands in a heretic's gore,
They stood and burnt for a rule of faith.
What would I burn for, and whom not spare?
I, who had faith in an easy-chair.

Now do I see old tales are true,
  Here in the clutch of a savage foe;
Now shall I know what my fathers knew,
  Bodily anguish and bitter woe,
Naked and bound in the strong sun's glare,
Far from my civilized easy-chair.

Now have I tasted and understood
  That old world feeling of mortal hate;
For the eyes all round us are hot with blood;
  They will kill us coolly—they do but wait;
While I, I would sell ten lives, at least,
For one fair stroke at that devilish priest

Just in return for the kick he gave,
  Bidding me call on the prophet's name;
Even a dog by this may save
  Skin from the knife, and soul from the
    flame;

My soul! if he can let the prophet burn it,
But life is sweet if a word may earn it.

A bullock's death, and at thirty years!
Just one phrase, and a man gets off it;
Look at that mongrel clerk in his tears
Whining aloud the name of the prophet;
Only a formula easy to patter,
And, God Almighty, what *can* it matter?

"Matter enough," will my comrade say
Praying aloud here close at my side,
"Whether you mourn in despair alway,
Cursed for ever by Christ denied;
Or whether you suffer a minute's pain
All the reward of Heaven to gain."

Not for a moment faltereth he,
Sure of the promise and pardon of sin;
Thus did the martyrs die, I see,
Little to lose and muckle to win;

Death means Heaven, he longs to receive it,
But what shall I do if I don't believe it?

Life is pleasant, and friends may be nigh,
Fain would I speak one word and be spared;
Yet I could be silent and cheerfully die,
If I were only sure God cared;
If I had faith, and were only certain
That light is behind that terrible curtain.

But what if He listeth nothing at all
Of words a poor wretch in his terror may say?
That mighty God who created all
To labour and live their appointed day;
Who stoops not either to bless or ban,
Weaving the woof of an endless plan.

He is the Reaper, and binds the sheaf,
Shall not the season its order keep?

Can it be changed by a man's belief?
Millions of harvests still to reap;
Will God reward, if I die for a creed,
Or will He but pity, and sow more seed?

Surely He pities who made the brain,
When breaks that mirror of memories sweet,
When the hard blow falleth, and never again
Nerve shall quiver nor pulse shall beat;
Bitter the vision of vanishing joys;
Surely He pities when man destroys.

Here stand I on the ocean's brink,
Who hath brought news of the further shore?
How shall I cross it? Sail or sink,
One thing is sure, I return no more;
Shall I find haven, or aye shall I be
Tossed in the depths of a shoreless sea?

They tell fair tales of a far-off land,
  Of love rekindled, of forms renewed;
There may I only touch one hand
  Here life's ruin will little be rued;
But the hand I have pressed and the voice I
    have heard,
To lose them for ever, and all for a word!

Now do I feel that my heart must break
  All for one glimpse of a woman's face;
Swiftly the slumbering memories wake
  Odour and shadow of hour and place;
One bright ray through the darkening past
Leaps from the lamp as it brightens last,

Showing me summer in western land
  Now, as the cool breeze murmureth
In leaf and flower—And here I stand
  In this plain all bare save the shadow of
    death;

Leaving my life in its full noonday,
And no one to know why I flung it away.

Why? Am I bidding for glory's roll?
I shall be murdered and clean forgot;
Is it a bargain to save my soul?
God, whom I trust in, bargains not;
Yet for the honour of English race,
May I not live or endure disgrace.

Ay, but the word, if I could have said it,
I by no terrors of hell perplext;
Hard to be silent and have no credit
From man in this world, or reward in the next;
None to bear witness and reckon the cost
Of the name that is saved by the life that is lost.

I must be gone to the crowd untold
  Of men by the cause which they served
    unknown,
Who moulder in myriad graves of old;
  Never a story and never a stone
Tells of the martyrs who die like me,
Just for the pride of the old countree.

III.

SOMNIA.

India, 1857.

A LATE moon that sinks o'er a river
  Flowing luminous, languid, and still;
Long white tents that shroud men, and shiver
  In the cold morning breeze from the hill;

Just a thin veil of darkness above you,
  While the cool quiet hour is your own;
Then farewell to the faces that love you,
  With the fast fading night they'll be gone.

Look up, see above you the star-land
  Wanes dim with the flush of the dawn,

You are called from your flight to the far land,
And your visions must break with the morn.

But your soul, by sweet memories haunted,
Still wanders, forgetful and free,
To the West, and in echoes enchanted
Hears the long winding plash of the sea.

Ah, sleep, though the falling dews wet you;
Ah, rest in that home while you may;
Other scenes, other sounds, shall beset you
When you wake, and your dreams pass away.

When the sun beats aflame on your faces,
What the old fighters felt, ye shall feel,
When the pitiless strife of the races
Flashes out in the smoke and the steel;

For the plain, bare and burning, lies yonder,
And perchance, when the war-cloud has passed,
Never more, day or night, shalt thou wander
And thy sleep shall be dreamless at last.

IV.

AFTER THE SKIRMISH.

Rohilcund, 1858.

'Mid the broken grass of a trampled glade,
Where the bayonets met and the fight was sorest,
We had found him lying ; and there we laid
Our friend in the depth of an Indian forest ;

Just as the evening shadow's pall
Over his grave from the hills came streaming,
By the rippled fret and the eddying fall
Of a snow-fed river, cool and creaming.

With the funeral march still echoing round,
We had spread the mould o'er his tartan gory;
But as we turned from the shapeless mound
Sweet rose the music of "Annie Laurie;"

Full and clear from the pacing band,
Passionate strain of a love-lorn story,
How can they breathe it in strangers' land,
Air of our northern Annie Laurie?

For he whom we leave in the lonely brake,
Watched by the Himalay mountains hoary,
Will not his brain from the death-sleep wake,
Touched by the magic of Annie Laurie?

Heaven forfend! May the earth lie dense
O'er the heart that beat and the eyes that glistened;
What if a motionless nerve has sense?
What if an upturned face had listened?

Listened! as over his prison close
Floated that rich, voluptuous cadence,
Faint with the scent, like an autumn rose,
Of youth, and beauty, and soft-hued maidens;

Of a long late eve, and the falling dew;
Never again shall the dew-drop wet him;
Of a woman's hand, and a promise true—
Will not the kindliest now forget him?

Chaining his spirit's upward flight,
Staying his soul, though at heaven's own portal,
With the soft refrain of a lost delight,
With the shadowy charm of a fairy mortal.

Lured by the sensuous melody's spell,
Little he recks of the angel's glory;
Piercing sad is the earth's farewell
Sighed in the music of "Annie Laurie."

V.

RAJPOOT REBELS

On the Sardah, 1858.

WHERE the mighty cliffs are frowning
Far o'er the torrents fall,
And the pine and the oak stand crowning
The ridges of high Nepaul,

Sat twenty Rajpoot rebels,
Haggard and pale and thin,
Lazily chucking the pebbles
Into the foaming lynn.

Their eyes were sunken and weary,
With a sort of listless woe
They looked from their desolate eyrie
Over the plains below.

They turned from the mountain breezes
And shivered with cold and damp,
They were faint with the fierce diseases
Of the deadly jungle swamp.

Two had wounds from a sabre
And one from an Enfield ball,
But no one cared for his neighbour,
There was sickness or wounds on all.

The Rajpoot leader rose then
Stiffly and slow from the ground,
He looked at the camp of his foes then,
And he looked at his brethren round;

And he said: 'From my country driven
'With the last of my hunted band,
'My home to another given,
'On a foreign soil I stand.

'They have burnt every roof in the village,
'They have slain the best of my kin,
'They have ruined and burnt and pillaged,
'And yet we had done no sin;

'Our clans were heady and rude,
'Our robbers many and tall,
'But our fighting never shed English blood,
'Nor harried an English hall.

'The king took tithe if he might;
'He was paid by a knave or a fool;
'For we held our lands on a firmer right
'Than is given by parchment rule;

'Our fathers of old had cleared it
'From the jungle with axe and sword,
'Our ancient rights had endeared it
'To him who was chief and lord.

'Our father's curse with our father's land,
'Like the wrath of a great god's blow
'May it fall on the head and the iron hand
'And the heart of our English foe.

'As our fathers fought, we fight;
'But a sword and a matchlock gun,
''Gainst the serried line of bayonets bright
'A thousand moving like one!

'From the banks of Ganges holy,
'From the towers of fair Lucknow,
'They have driven us surely and slowly,
'They have crushed us blow on blow.

* * * *
* * * *

'When the army has slain its fill,
'When they bid the hangman cease;

'They will beckon us down from the desert
hill
'To go to our homes in peace.

'To plough with a heavy heart,
'And, of half our fields bereft,
''Gainst the usurer's oath, and the lawyer's
art
'To battle that some be left.

'At the sight of an English face
'Loyally bow the head,
'And cringe like slaves to the surly race
'For pay and a morsel of bread;

'Toil like an ox or a mule
'To earn the stranger his fee—
'Our sons may brook the Feringhee's rule,
'There is no more life for me!'

VI.

MEDITATIONS OF A HINDU PRINCE.

ALL the world over, I wonder, in lands that
I never have trod,
Are the people eternally seeking for the signs
and steps of a God?
Westward across the ocean, and Northward
across the snow,
Do they all stand gazing, as ever, and what
do the wisest know?

Here, in this mystical India, the deities hover
and swarm
Like the wild bees heard in the tree-tops, or
the gusts of a gathering storm;

In the air men hear their voices, their feet on
the rocks are seen,
Yet we all say, "Whence is the message, and
what may the wonders mean?"

A million shrines stand open, and ever the
censer swings,
As they bow to a mystic symbol, or the
figures of ancient kings;
And the incense rises ever, and rises the
endless cry
Of those who are heavy laden, and of cowards
loth to die.

For the Destiny drives us together, like deer
in a pass of the hills,
Above is the sky, and around us the sound of
the shot that kills;
Pushed by a Power we see not, and struck
by a hand unknown,

We pray to the trees for shelter, and press
our lips to a stone.

The trees wave a shadowy answer, and the
rock frowns hollow and grim,
And the form and the nod of the demon are
caught in the twilight dim;
And we look to the sunlight falling afar on
the mountain crest,
Is there never a path runs upward to a refuge
there and a rest?

The path, ah! who has shown it, and which
is the faithful guide?
The haven, ah! who has known it? for steep
is the mountain side,
Forever the shot strikes surely, and ever the
wasted breath
Of the praying multitude rises, whose answer
is only death.

Here are the tombs of my kinsfolk, the fruit
of an ancient name,
Chiefs who were slain on the war-field, and
women who died in flame;
They are gods, these kings of the foretime
they are spirits who guard our race,
Ever I watch and worship; they sit with a
marble face.

And the myriad idols around me, and the
legion of muttering priests,
The revels and rites unholy, the dark un-
speakable feasts!
What have they wrung from the Silence?
Hath even a whisper come
Of the secret, Whence and Whither? Alas!
for the gods are dumb.

Shall I list to the word of the English, who
come from the uttermost sea?

"The Secret, hath it been told you, and what
is your message to me?"
It is nought but the wide-world story how
the earth and the heavens began,
How the gods are glad and angry, and a
Deity once was man.

I had thought, "Perchance in the cities
where the rulers of India dwell,
Whose orders flash from the far land, who
girdle the earth with a spell,
They have fathomed the depths we float on,
or measured the unknown main—"
Sadly they turn from the venture, and say
that the quest is vain.

Is life, then, a dream and delusion, and
where shall the dreamer awake?
Is the world seen like shadows on water, and
what if the mirror break?

Shall it pass as a camp that is struck, as a
tent that is gathered and gone
From the sands that were lamp-lit at eve,
and at morning are level and lone?

Is there nought in the heaven above, whence
the hail and the levin are hurled,
But the wind that is swept around us by the
rush of the rolling world?
The wind that shall scatter my ashes, and
bear me to silence and sleep
With the dirge, and the sounds of lamenting,
and voices of women who weep.

VII.

A RAJPOOT CHIEF OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

Moribundus Loquitur.

AND why say ye that I must leave
This pleasure-garden, where the sun
Is baffled by the boughs that weave
Their shade o'er my pavilion?
The trees I planted with my hands,
This house I built among the sands,
Within a lofty wall which rounds
This green oasis, kept with care;
With room for my horses, hawks, and hounds,
And the cool arcade for my ladies fair.

How often, while the landscape flames
With heat, within the marble court
I lie, and laugh to see my dames
About the shimmering fountain sport:
Or after the long scorching days,
When the hot wind hushes, and falling stays
The clouds of dust, and stars are bright,
I've spread my carpets in the grove,
And talked and loitered the live-long night
With some foreign leman light o' love.

My wives—I married, as was fit,
Some thirteen of the purest blood—
And two or three have germs of wit,
And almost all are chaste and good;
But all their womanhood has been
Hencooped behind a marble screen;
They count their pearls and doze—while she,
The courtezan, had travelled far,

Her songs were fresh, her talk was free
Of the Delhi Court, or the Kábul War.

Those days are gone, I am old and ill,
Why should I move? I love the place;
The dawn is fresh, the nights are still;
Ah yes! I see it in your face,
My latest dawn and night are nigh,
And of my clan a chief must die
Within the ancestral rampart's fold
Paced by the listening sentinel,
Where ancient cannon, and beldames old
As the guns, peer down from the citadel.

Once more, once only, they shall bear
My litter up the steep ascent
That pierces, mounting stair on stair,
The inmost ring of battlement.
Oft-times that frowning gate I've past
(This time, but one, shall be the last)

Where the tribal dæmon's image stands
Crowning the arch, and on the side
Are scarlet prints of woman's hands—
Farewell! and forth must the lady ride,

Her face unveiled, in rich attire,
She strikes the stone with fingers red,
"Farewell the palace, to the pyre
We follow, widows of the dead!"
And I, whose life has reached its verge,
Bethink me of the wailing dirge
That day my father forth was borne
High seated, swathed in many a shawl,
By priests who scatter flowers, and mourn;
And the eddying smoke of the funeral.

Thus did he vanish; With him went
Seven women, by the flames set free;
I built a stately monument
To shrine their graven effigy:

In front my father, godlike, stands,
The widows kneel with folded hands;
All yearly rites are duly paid,
All round are planted sacred trees,
And the ghosts are soothed by the spreading shade,
And lulled by the strain of their obsequies.

His days were troubled: his curse I earned
Full often, ere he passed that arch,
My father, by his farms we burned,
By raiding on the English march;
And then that summer I rebelled,
One fort we seized, and there we held
Until my father's guns grew hot;
But the floods and darkness veiled our flight,
We rode their lines with never a shot,
For the matches were moist in the rainy night.

That's forty years ago; and since,
With all these wild unruly clans,
In this salt wilderness, a prince
Of camel-riding caterans,
I've sought religiously, Heaven knows,
A life of worship and repose,
Vext by the stiff ungrateful league
Of all my folk in fretful stir,
By priests and gods in dark intrigue,
And the wasting curse of the sorcerer.

They say I seized their broad estates,
Upbraid me with a kinsman's blood;
He led his bands before my gates,
And then—it was an ancient feud;
But I must offer gifts, and pray
The Brahmin's stain be washed away.
Saint and poisoner, fed with bribes,
Deep versed in every traitorous plan—

I told them only to kill the scribes,
But my Afgháns hated the holy man.

Yes, peace is blessed, and prayer is good;
My eldest son defied my power;
I lost his mother in the wood
That hides my lonely hunting tower:
She was a proud unbroken dame:
Like son, like mother, hard to tame
Or tire—And so he took the bent,
His mother's kinsfolk at his heel,
With many a restless malcontent;
There were some had ease, ere I sheathed
my steel.

The English say I govern ill,
That laws must silence spear and gun,
So may my peaceful subjects till;
But peaceful subjects have I none.
I can but follow my fathers' rule,

I cannot learn in an English school;
  Yet the hard world softens, and change is best,
  My sons must leave the ancient ways,
  The folk are weary, the land shall rest,
  And the gods are kind, for I end my days.

Then carry me to my castle steep,
  Whose time is ending with its lord's:
Eight months my grandsire held the keep
  Against the fierce Maratha hordes;
It would not stand three winter suns
Before the shattering English guns;
  And so these rude old faithful stones,
  My fathers' haven in high war-tide,
  Must rive and moulder, as soon my bones
  Shall bleach on the holy river side.

Years hence, when all the earth is calm,
  And forts are level, and foes agree

Since feuds must end, to trade and farm,
And toil, like oxen, patiently;
When this my garden palace stands
A desert ruin, choked with sands,
A broken well 'mid trees that fade,
Some traveller still my name may bless,
The chief long syne that left him shade
And a water spring in the wilderness.

VIII.

STUDIES AT DELHI, 1876.

I.—The Hindu Ascetic.

HERE as I sit by the Jumna bank,
  Watching the flow of the sacred stream,
Pass me the legions, rank on rank,
  And the cannon roar, and the bayonets gleam.

Is it a god or a king that comes?
  Both are evil, and both are strong;
With women and worshipping, dancing and drums,
  Carry your gods and your kings along.

Fanciful shapes of a plastic earth,
  These are the visions that weary the eye;

These I may 'scape by a luckier birth,
Musing, and fasting, and hoping to die.

When shall these phantoms flicker away?
Like the smoke of the guns on the wind-swept hill,
Like the sounds and colours of yesterday:
And the soul have rest, and the air be still.

[*The same done into Greek elegiacs.*[1]]

Ὁ ΓΥΜΝΟΣΟΦΙΣΤΗΣ.

(PUNJAB, B.C. 327.)

Τίς με βοή, τί θέαμα καθημένον ἐνθάδ' ἱκάνει,
γηράσκονθ' ἱεροῦ πὰρ ποταμοῖο ῥοαῖς;
ἀνδρῶν δὴ πυκιναὶ στίχες αἴδ', αἴγλη τε κιόντων
ἄσπετος ἐκλάμπει, καὶ κτύπος ἱπποσύνης·

[1] By Sir Frederick Pollock, who has very kindly allowed them to be published.

τῶν θεὸς ἢ βασιλεύς, πάντως κακόν, ἡγεμονεύει·
ὕβρις δ' ἠδὲ βίη σχέτλιος ἀμφοτέρων.
ἃ δειλοί, βασιλῆα προπέμπετε δαίμονά θ' οὕτω
σὺν δούπῳ τυπάνων σύν τε κορῶν θιάσῳ·
μυρία γὰρ τοιαῦτ' ἔτεκεν φυσίζοος αἶα,
φάσματα καὶ νεφέλην, τοῖς ἐσιδοῦσι πόνον·
ὧν ἄπο κἂν γενεῆς ἐπὶ λῴονος ἀλλαξαίμην,
νήστισι συννοίαις ἰέμενος θανάτου.
ἀλλὰ γένοιθ' ὅτε ταῦτ' ἔρροι πάλιν, ὥστε κονίην
ἀνδρῶν μαρναμένων ἐσκέδασε ζέφυρος,
ψυχή θ', ὡς χθεσινῆς μορφῆς φθογγῶν τε λέληθε,
νήνεμον ἐξανύοι νήγρετος ἡσυχίην.

II.—BADMINTON.

Hardly a shot from the gate we stormed,
Under the Moree battlement's shade;
Close to the glacis our game was formed,
There had the fight been, and there we played.

Lightly the demoiselles tittered and leapt,
Merrily capered the players all;
North, was the garden where Nicholson slept,
South, was the sweep of a battered wall.

Near me a Musalmán, civil and mild,
Watched as the shuttlecocks rose and fell;
And he said, as he counted his beads and smiled,
"God smite their souls to the depths of hell."

IX.

RETROSPECTION.

1857—1882.

WELL; I've walked the jail, and the Courts
I've seen,
The school is in order, the streets are clean,
And the roads are swept and mended;
The treasury's right, you've got the keys?
So now, at the spring of the evening breeze,
Just leave me to linger among those trees,
I'll come when the twilight's ended.

Yes, the garden now looks spruce and trim,
Yet the old trees still, though decayed and
grim,
Stand waving as if they knew me;

All else is changed since I saw the ground,
(How the roses bloom on that sloping
mound !)
And the long lean branches swaying around
With their shadowy arms pursue me.

As I cross the flower-bed, laid with taste
Where the old grove sheltered a sandy waste,
How soft the geraniums gleam in
The light of a dusty crimson sky !
Yes, only the trees remember, and I,
Things once spoken, and done, hard by
The spot where we now stand dreaming.

That year when the tempest of mutiny broke,
And the empire swayed like a storm-bent
oak,
When the sepoys gave no quarter;
When Islam had risen and Delhi fell,
And this plain was a furnace hot as hell;

We were camped, three English, beside that well:
We had nothing but shade and water.

Hour after hour, till the day was spent,
We had watched our restless regiment,
And the soldiers whispering round us
In the glaring noon-tide heat; and yet
Our hearts sank low when the red orb set,
And the soft dark night like a falling net
In its unseen meshes bound us.

He was my Colonel and she was his wife;
We had little comfort or hope in life;
And he said "Is it worth complaining,
As you look at the sullen sepoys' line,
That they bide but the hour and await the sign
That shall end our cares in the fierce sunshine
And the ills of a rough campaigning?

"It shall never be heard in the English host
That I lost my colours and left my post
From a treacherous band to hide me;
We are trapped and hemmed in this cursed
wood,
Yet stand I ready" ('twas there he stood)
"To die as a Christian soldier should,
With my wife and my friend beside me."

Then he clasped her close in a warm
embrace,
And he took my hand; but I marked her
face
And the flashing glance she gave me:
For the mutinous eyes said, "Life is sweet
While nerves have courage and hearts can
beat;
Will you crouch like a hare at the hunter's
feet,
Will you die like a fool, or save me?"

So I saddled in silence our horses three,
And I brought them there, to that tamarind tree,
And the night, as now, was falling,
And the air was heavy, as now, with scent,
And just outside at the sepoy tent
The armed sentry came and went,
We could hear his comrades calling;

And I whispered "Up; 'twill be lighter soon,
See the faint foreglow of the rising moon,
Let your wife mount quick—God speed her,
Her Arab can gallop, he needs no lash,
We can break their line with a sudden dash;
But a man may fall when the volleys flash,
So will you ride last, or lead her?"

Lightly the lady to saddle sprung;
But the other's hand to the bridle clung,

And he said "Do ye all betray me?
I serve the Queen, and I trust the Lord;
Shall I stain mine honour and break my word?
I move not hence while I wear this sword,
And I charge you both, obey me."

Then none for a moment spoke or moved;
One look she gave me, the woman I loved,
And said but one word, "Listen;"
As there came one tap of the sepoy's drum,
And the light air shook with the tramp and
the hum
Of a moving crowd, and I said "They come,
I can see their bayonets glisten;

"They come; You boast of a soldier's faith,
Will it screen your wife from a cruel death?
Remember the troth you plighted,
And your home in the far-off summer days,
And a young life lost for an empty phrase;"

But he said "Wherever I stay, she stays:
We shall meet our end united."

Then I cried, "'Tis the craze of a fevered brain,
Will you take your hand from her bridle rein,
Will you mount and ride?" "No, never,"
He said, And she bent from her saddle low,
And she touched my cheek and whispered "Go,"
With her eyes all full of despair and woe;
"Good-bye sweetheart, for ever!'

And then? One shot, and her rein was free,
And fast and furious I and she
Out of the grove were flying;
The white smoke rose, and the leaves were stirred,
But only the solemn branches heard
Or sound or motion, of sign or word,
As he lay beneath them dying.

A shout, a volley, a rushing ride:
The low moon led us, and side by side
We followed from dark to dawning
Over the streams and the silent plain;
All sights and shadows and sounds again
And figures are flitting across my brain;
And the meeting of eyes at morning.

Yes; this was the hour, and that was the spot,
And the mute trees know who fired that shot,
But the secret well they're keeping;
How they beckon and bend in the gathering gloom
O'er the sloping mound where the roses bloom!
Can that be an old forgotten tomb,
Is it there that the Colonel's sleeping?

X.

THE AMIR'S SOLILOQUY.

1881.

"Latest news from Afghanistan promises ill for future tranquillity. The Amir has failed in conciliating the Duranis, there is jealousy at Herat . . . . the Kohistanis are discontented . . . . the Ghilzais are restless, Lughman tribes are showing uneasiness . . . . No doubt the situation is far from reassuring, and calls for great tact and administrative ability on the Amir's part."—*Times telegram, 15th December,* 1881.

SCENE.—The Bála Hissar at Kábul. *The Amir soliloquises:*

THUS is my banishment ended; it's twelve long years, well nigh,
Since I fought the last of my lost fights, and saw my best men die;

They hunted me over the passes, and up to
the Oxus stream,
We had just touched land on the far side as
we saw their spearheads gleam.

Then came the dolorous exile, the life in a
conquered land
Where the Frank had trodden on Islam; the
alms at a stranger's hand;
While here in the fort of my fathers my
bitterest foe held sway;
He was ten years building his kingdom, it
all fell down in a day.

May he rest, the Amir Sher Ali, in his tomb
by the holy shrine;
The virtues of God are pardon and pity, they
never were mine;
They have never been ours, in a kingdom all
stained with the blood of our kin,

Where the brothers embrace in the war-field,
and the reddest sword must win.

And yet when I think of Sher Ali, as he lies
in his sepulchre low,
How he died betrayed, heartbroken, 'twixt
infidel friend and foe,
Driven from his throne by the English, and
scorned by the Russian, his guest,
I am well content with the vengeance, and I
see God works for the best.

But all His ways are warnings; and I, God's
slave, must heed
How I bargain for help with the Káfir, or
lean on a venomous reed;
For never did chief more sorely need Heaven
for his aid and stay
Than the man who would reign in this
country, and tame Afgháns for a day.

I look from a fort half-ruined on Kábul spreading below,
On the near hills crowned with cannon, and the far hills piled with snow;
Fair are the vales well watered, and the vines on the upland swell,
You might think you were reigning in Heaven—I know I am ruling Hell.

For there's hardly a room in my palace but a kinsman there was killed,
And never a street in the city but with false fierce curs is filled;
With a mob of priests, and fanatics, and all my mutinous host;
They follow my steps, as the wolves do, for a prince who slips is lost.

And they eye me askance, the Mollahs, the bigots who preach and pray,

Who followed my march with curses till I
scattered Ayúb that day;
They trusted in texts and forgot that the
chooser of kings is a sword;
There are twenty now silent and stark, for I
showed them the ways of the Lord.

And far from the Suleiman heights come the
sounds of the stirring of tribes,
Afreedi, Hazára, and Ghilzi, they clamour for
plunder or bribes;
And Herát is but held by a thread; and the
Usbeg has raised Badukshán;
And the chief may sleep sound, in his grave,
who would rule the unruly Afghán.

Shall I stretch my right hand to the Indus,
that England may fill it with gold?
Shall my left beckon aid from the Oxus? the
Russian blows hot and blows cold;

The Afghán is but grist in their mill, and the
waters are moving it fast,
Let the stone be the upper or nether, it
grinds him to powder at last.

And the lord of the English writes, "Order,
and justice, and govern with laws,"
And the Russian he sneers and says,
"Patience, and velvet to cover your
claws;"
But the kingdoms of Islam are crumbling—
and round me a voice ever rings
Of death, and the doom of my country—
shall I be the last of its kings.

XI.

THE AMIR'S MESSAGE.

1882.

I.

ABDURRAHMÁN, the Duráni Khán, to the
Ghilzaie Chief wrote he :
"God has made me Amir of the Afgháns,
but thou on thy hills art free.
"I rule by the sword and signet, I care not
to flatter or bribe ;
"I take nor fee nor tribute of the noble
Ghilzaie tribe ;
"Nor pledge nor promise I ask of thee ; I
pardon, if all men know
"That thy heart has been hard against me,
and thy friend has been my foe.

"For the sons of Sher Ali are exiles, their best men broken or fled,

"And those who escaped are homeless, and all whom I found are dead.

"Such is the work of the Merciful, whose will is to smite or to save;

"It is He gives wealth and vengeance, or tears o'er a bloodstained grave.

"Now, while the swords are a moment still, ere ever fresh blood shall run,

"I look for a wise man's counsel, and I would that Afgháns were one.

"From Merv, last home of the free-lance, the clansmen are scattering far,

"And the Turkmán horses are harnessed to the guns of the Russian Czar.

"So choose thou of all my liegemen, or choose thou of all my host,

"One true man, loyal-hearted, whomever thou trustest most,

"Whom thy tribe has known and honoured,
to bring thee in safety and peace;
"Thou shalt ride unscathed to Kábul, and
the feud of our lives shall cease."

II.

The Ghilzaie Chief wrote answer—"Our
paths are narrow and steep,
"The sun burns fierce in the valleys, and the
snow-fed streams run deep;
"The fords of the Kábul river are watched
by the Afreedee;
"We harried his folk last springtide, and he
keeps good memory.
"High stands thy Kábul citadel, where many
have room and rest;
"The Amirs give welcome entry, but they
speed not a parting guest;
"So a stranger needs safe escort, and the
oath of a valiant friend;

"Whom shall I choose of those I know?
whom ask the Amir to send?

"Wilt thou send the Vazir, Noor Ahmed,
the man whom the Ghilzaies trust?

"He has long lain lost in a dungeon, his true
bold heart is dust.

"Wilt thou send the Jamsheedee Ága, who
was called from the western plain?

"He left the black tents of his horsemen, and
he led them never again.

"Shall I ask for the Moollah, in Ghuzni to
whom all Afgháns rise?

"He was bid last year to thy banqueting—
his soul is in Paradise.

"Where is the chief Faizulla, to pledge me
the word of his clan?

"He is far from his pine-clad highlands, and
the vineyards of Kohistán:

"He is gone with the rest—all vanished; he
passed through thy citadel gate;

"Will they come now, these I have chosen?
I watch for their faces and wait;
"For the night-shade falls over Kábul, and
dark is the downward track,
"And the guardian hills ring an echo of
voices that warn me back;
"Let the Ghilzaie bide on his mountain, and
depart, as thy message has said,
"When but one sure friend the Amir shall
send,—when the tombs give up their
dead."

XII.

A SERMON IN LOWER BENGAL

(1864.)

Hajee Mahomed Ghazee *oorf* Moojahid-ood-deen Wahabee, preacher from Arabia *viâ* Kábul and Swat, addresses the secret assembly.

MEN of the Indian cities who call on the Prophet s name,
By our brotherhood in Islam ye besought me and I came,
From a country hard and barren to a softly watered land,
To a round sky line of harvest from a wilderness of sand;

From our bare and barren homesteads, from
our feast of dates and milk
To your palaces, your flesh pots, and your
raiment of the silk;
From a land of fenced citadels, where blood
is lightly shed
Where a clan must hold its borders, and a
man must keep his head;
Where the wayfarer benighted, as he nears a
village late
Spies the red spark from the matches of the
guard about the gate,
Where the faithful watch in vain, except the
Lord their city keep—
Here the infidels protect you, and with open
door ye sleep.

You have sought my aid and counsel, I must
lead you, I must pray

That the God of Islam may restore your old
imperial sway,
In the towns your fathers founded, in the
provinces they named
May revive a faith forgotten, and the rites
that ye have maimed;
That he prosper your conspiracy and send
his spirit forth
On the Arab of the Dekhan and the Afghán
of the North;
So the bayonet be dashed aside with the
swing of a curved sword
And ye reap a bloody harvest with the sickle
of the Lord.
Can I bid you hope and prosper? Verily
such things may be
Men have conquered (nothing doubting)
greater odds than you shall see;
Yea, you Musalmáns are many; and their
fighting men are few.

Prayer is good—but practice better—What
is it that ye can do?
Will ye fight for this fair heritage, this
empire that ye lost?
Yea, our God is God of battles, and the
martyrs are his host,
Will ye join that noble army? Will ye rather
death than shame?
Will ye play for all ye pray for when your
heads are on the game?

No—your brains are dull with eating, and
your hearts are choked with lust,
And your seat is loose in saddle, and your
scimitars are rust.
Ye are cankered by the luxury that keeps
you rich and weak,
Ye trade in wine and usury—Nay hear, for I
must speak—

Shall I care for noisy menace, or the weight
of an Indian blow?
I who stormed the English picket on the
skirt of Siah Koh,
When the wild Bajour mountain men lay
choking with their blood
And the Káfirs held their footing, for I slew
one where he stood.
They are cursed, but so are cowards; and
when ye can fight as they did
God succours all such Musalmáns; and *then*
shall ye be aided
When ye gird your loins to harness, and re-
nounce your gainful ease,
When ye quit your painted Tázeahs and
pagan heresies—
Ye who bow to graven sepulchres, and adore
a martyr's stone,
Who pray to a dead hermit, that should pray
to God alone—

When ye shun the Hindu festivals, the tinkling of the bell,
The dancing, the idolatries, the harlotry of hell;
When ye kneel to God in penitence, and cringe no more to men,
Ye shall smite the stiff-necked infidel, and rule, but not till then.
Then be of courage, oh men; yea though here in the darkness is burning
Faintly the light of our faith, by your sins and your ignorance dimmed,
Once it was lit by the Lord, and he knoweth no shadow of turning,
He shall pour oil at his time, and in season the lamp shall be trimmed.
Then shall ye hark to his voice, and start from your sleep at the warning
Pealing afar through the land, that spent is the last watch of night,

Sound as of bugle in camp, how it rings
through the chill air of morning
Bidding the soldier arise, he must wake and
be armed ere the light.
Strong must your heart and your hand be, no
time for soft dreams is before you,
Woe to the coward who sleeps, when the
darkness that bound him has flown,
Firm be your faith and your feet, when the
sun's burning rays shall be o'er you,
When the rifles are ranging in line, and the
clear note of battle is blown.

* * * *
* * * *

So ye are stirred by my words, ye pardon my
scorn and upbraiding,
Eagerly circle me round and ask, will I lead
an attack?

Nay, though your spirits be willing, your
flesh is but weak for crusading,
When I face Englishmen's cannon I want
better stuff at my back.

XIII.

JOAB SPEAKETH.

And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the Lord, and said unto Joab, "Come forth." And he said, "Nay; but I will die here."—1 *Kings*, ii. 30.

1.

HAIL to the Lion of Judah's tribe,
Praise ye him ever in temple and tent,
Mercy and grace to his name ascribe:
What is the message my King hath sent?

2.

Mighty without is the people's din,
Solomon, reigneth, they clamour and cry;
Here it is quiet the temple within,
This is the hour and the place to die.

3.

For David, ancient King, is dead
And, dying, left his latest word
To Solomon, who rules instead,
That he should slay me by the sword.
Why stands Benaiah at the gate?
For, though I clasp the altar's horn,
Yet little reck I of my fate,
The twinge of death I hold in scorn;
For I am stricken deep in years
And I have drunk the lees of life;
Of smiting steel have I no fears,
My days were passed in deadly strife;

4.

And when he gave his son bequest
(For conscience sake and kingdom's good)
"Give Joab's age no peaceful rest
But bring his grey hairs down in blood."
Small need had David to be told

That Joab like a chief would fall;
For he and I are comrades old,
And whether in the days of Saul
At bay upon the rugged heights
By all the army's strength assailed,
Or in the fierce Philistian fights,
He knew my heart had never quailed.

5.

For Solomon—it suits him well
To slay a man who dared rebel;
But thou! it seems a cruel thing,
I was the Captain of thy host,
O valiant friend and warrior King
I served thee best, I loved thee most;
That thou wast careful to bequeath
A legacy of bloody death,
In tardy vengeance for the stain
Of Abner and Amasa slain.
Thyself—did dead Uriah's wife

Remind thee of my sinful life?

Well! times are changed, by God his will,
And Kings alone are free to kill;
Yet when he spake the words of doom
That echoed round his opening tomb,
Remembering all the by-gone feud
And fierce revenge of soldiers rude,
Might David with some touch of ruth
Recall our stormy days of youth?
Of all the hardy outlaw train
That kept the hill and swept the plain,
His boldest men-at-arms were three,
His sister's sons. And ever we
(For that he was a comrade true
And better swordsman never drew
His blade against a champion foe)
Followed and saw his fortunes grow,
Until the tribes their monarch hailed,
So mightily his name prevailed.

6.

Did he remember the time, when down on his heritage [1] fair
Ziklag, gift of a King, came Amalek, infidel thief?
Harried and ravished and spoilt—we found all burning and bare,
Loud was the cry of the people and sore against David the Chief.

Far o'er the sand we pursued, and sharp was the fight and the slaughter,
Many fell off by the track, but we three were all to the fore.
Or when a host was defied for a draught of Bethlehem's water,[2]
One was my brother, he went, and Benaiah who stands at the door.

[1] 1 Samuel, xxx.
[2] 2 Samuel, xxiii. 15.

Those were the wild old days of war, and raids, and disorder,
Who was to reckon his blows, or stickle at stabbing a man?
Fighting for freedom and lands, and the city of God in our borders,
Judah the Chief of the tribes, and David the lord of our clan.

Enemies oft have I killed, but two, I think, were the greatest,
Absalom, rebel indeed, and Abner, Captain of Saul;
Why should I spare such a prince? Why stab not a man whom thou hatest?
David may punish their death, but David was raised by their fall.

Yet is my end to be thus—but it stands to all ages a token,

Rough is the path of war, and bloody the steps to a throne;
Sharpest the struggle of all when the bonds of a nation are broken,
When house is set against house, and each man fights for his own.

Then as they wrestle for rule, and strive in the hot death labour,
When the leader who fails is lost, and the flames of rebellion spread,
A monarch laughs in his heart as he watches the swing of a sabre,
Hears of a traitor slain, nor asks for the names of the dead.

But when the throne is firm, and cold are the hands that would shake it,
Soft for the killing of men is the heart of the rulers that win;

Tender for Justice and Law, and hard upon
him who would break it,
Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord—let the
murderer die in his sin.
Woe to the soldier then, for thus shall his
zeal be requited.
Trapped by the meshes of law, stabbed by
the slaves of the quill;
While citizens timid and sleek, whom the
tale of his deeds affrighted,
Cry that the man of wrath may perish—
and have their will.

* * * *

Benaiah, brother in arms, I am pleased it is
thou that shalt end me;
Warily dost thou approach, knowing my
cunning at fence?
Nay, but our blood is cold, and I have not
the heart to defend me,
David has called, and I follow, so slay me
that I may go hence.

XIV.

PILATE'S WIFE'S DREAM.

"When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."—*St. Matthew*, xxvii. 19.

Pilate's wife speaketh (at first to a messenger).

So you went and you told him my word, as
he sat on the ivory throne;
He was troubled and pale as he heard, but
he gave you an answer? None!
He is dazed and daunted, the Roman, by
Jews, and the venomous gleam
Of their eyes—can he list to a woman or
hearken the tale of a dream?

Can he argue of mercy or ruth, while they
cry for the cross and the rods?

He smiles, and he asks "What is truth?"
when they show him the signs of the
gods;
By the washing and wiping of hands he is
cleansed from the blood of the just;
As the water is dried upon sands, so a life
flieth back to the dust.

His gods! they are strong and are bright, he
believeth in steel and in gold,
And in one that is fair, Aphrodite, the rest
are asleep or grown old;
And the world is the conqueror's prize; so
feasting and ease are the best;
And a soul is divine, but it dies that a Roman
may revel and rest.

For the murderous multitude foam, and the
palace is pale with alarm;
He looks, and the pitiless dome of the
heavens is empty and calm,

He heard not the hurrying sound as of ghosts
that arose from the deep;
He saw not the gathering round me of
terrors that torture sleep.

But they clouded the glass of my brain, the
Powers of the Air, while I slept,
Infinite ominous train, out of void into void
as they swept.
Are the myriad Manes warning that evil
shall come as a flood?
Or the kindly divinities mourning for the
sorrow of innocent blood?

For above came a crowd and a sighing; as
late in the last watch of night,
When in cities besieged is a crying of people
run wild with affright;
When the streets are all thronged in the
gloom, for with day comes slaughter
and storm,

So my ear rang with voices of doom, and
mine eye saw a vanishing form.

Then I woke, and the vision was o'er; and a
breath in the cypresses played,
And their boughs on the tesselate floor shed
a moonlit wandering shade;
The town lay aswoon at my feet, like a
sepulchre, white and still,
Faint with the midnight heat from the rocks
of the sunbeaten hill.

Who is He for whom spectres are risen to
threaten, and spirits to weep?
Who is this whom ye bear from your prison,
the face which I saw in my sleep?
The hours seem to hover and wait—is a
Nemesis loading their wings?
I am stirred by forebodings of fate, and the
sense of unspeakable things.

Our gods, we adore them with flowers, and
virginal chanting of lays;
They are kind as the sunshine and showers,
they bless us with fortunate days;
Can I kneel to this Lord of a stranger, whose
face I have seen not or known,
Who surrounds me with omens of danger;
invisible, stern, and alone?

Ah! let me hence, let me go from this
shadowy mystical East,
From phantoms that prophesy woe, from the
wild-eyed Syrian priest;
From the Spirit around me that dwells not
on earth nor is fashioned by hand,
From the maze of enchantment and spell
that is spread o'er this desolate land.

When shall my forehead be wet with the
spray of the Western sea?

When shall my face be set, O Italy, mother, to thee?
Flying the augury tragic that whispers of ruin to Rome,
Save me from madness and magic, O gods of my hearth and my home!

XV.

I.—EX OCCIDENTE VOX.

MANY a year have my sons gone forth;
Their bones are bleaching in field and flood;
They have carried my name from the ancient North,
They have borne it high through water and blood.

While the mariner's strength, and his ship, might last
Steering straight for the Orient lands,
Nor sweeping billow nor tearing blast
Could wrench the helm from his straining hands;

And the onward march of my soldiers' line,
Where was it broken by sword or sun?
The toil was theirs, and the prize was mine—
Thus was an empire lost and won.

Now my frontiers march on the Himalay snow,
And my landmarks stand on its loftiest crest;
Where the winds blow soft on the pines below,
There shall my legions halt and rest;

And the men of the cities in all the plain
From the silent hills to the sounding sea,
And a thousand tribes in the vast champaign,
They follow no leader or lord but me.

II.—WEST TO EAST.

Your life is sad in the dust and the sun,
  You dream and gaze at the brazen sky;
Let the gods be many, or God be none,
  One Fate stands ever, that all shall die.

Let sorrow or sleep in the shadow lurk,
  We are yet in the range of the broad sun rays;
And the night fast cometh when none shall work,
  So strive and be glad in the long light days.

'Fast and Pray,' said the sages of Ind;
  We know not what penance and prayer may give,

For visions are fading, and words are wind;
The Faith we bring you is Labour and Live.

Let the hard earth soften, and toil bring ease,
Let the king be just and the laws be strong;
Ye shall flourish and spread like the sheltered trees,
And the storms shall end, and the ancient wrong.

Some arms deep rusted, an old world rhyme,
A broken idol, a ruined fane,
May linger as waifs of the wild foretime,
When the gods were cruel and men were slain.

The lightning that shivers, the storms that sweep,
The wide full flood, and the drowning waves,

Still do ye fear them, and worship and weep?
They are still your gods? They shall be
your slaves.

Ye have courted them vainly with passion
and prayer;
Their gifts are but silence and infinite rest;
If the heavens are empty the earth may be
fair,
There is one life only, so labour is best.

As the rivers wander and currents change
Till the quickening stream is a barren
bed,
So the thoughts of men like the waters range
From ways forgotten and worships dead.

Let the temples moulder in gathering sand,
Let the stones lie strewn in the cedar
grove;

Ye shall rule like gods in a glorious land;
Ye shall live by knowledge, and peace, and love.

III.—EAST TO WEST.

O men of the wandering sea-borne race,
Your venture was high, but your wars are done,
Ye have rent my veil, ye behold my face;
What is the land that your arms have won?

Scored with the brand of the blinding heat
And the wrath divine, and the sins of man,
And the fateful tramp of the conqueror's feet,
It has suffered all, since the world began.

The forces that fashion, the hands that mould
Are the winds fire-laden, the sky, the rain;
Will the storms abate or the sun grow cold?

They are gods no more, but their spells
remain.

For the sun shall scorch and the fierce winds
blow,
And the pest strike sudden, and hunger
slay;
And if eyes see all that a man shall know,
What is evil or ease for a passing day?

If the lords of our life be pleasure and pain,
And the earth is their kingdom, and none
may flee,
Ye may take their wages who wear their
chain;
I may serve them never; and sleep is free.

Ye shall float and fade in the world of sense
As the clouds that hover, the rays that
gleam:

No hand shows whither, no tongue says whence—
Let me rest nor be troubled, if all is dream.

Let the deeps flow round and the darkness fall
Over the scenes of your glory and strife;
Let the shadows pass from the prison wall
For a moment lit by the lamp of life;

For the stories of men and of days that are gone,
Of towns now dust, of a vanished race,
Are but old names carved on the dungeon stone;
They lived, and laboured, and left their trace.

And the burden of thought and the travail of care

Weigh down the soul in its wandering
flight;
The sun burns ever, the plains lie bare;
It is death brings shade, and the dreamless
night.

XVI.

SIVA.

" Mors Janua Vitæ."

1.

I AM the God of the sensuous fire
That moulds all Nature in forms divine;
The symbols of death and of man's desire,
The springs of change in the world, are mine;
The organs of birth and the circlet of bones,
And the light loves carved on the temple stones.

2.

I am the lord of delights and pain,
Of the pest that killeth, of fruitful joys;

I rule the currents of heart and vein;
A touch gives passion, a look destroys;
In the heat and cold of my lightest breath
Is the might incarnate of Lust and Death.

3.

If a thousand altars stream with blood
Of the victims slain by the chanting priest,
Is a great God lured by the savoury food?
I reck not of worship, or song, or feast;
But that millions perish, each hour that flies,
Is the mystic sign of my sacrifice.

4.

Ye may plead and pray for the millions born;
They come like dew on the morning grass;
Your vows and vigils I hold in scorn,
The soul stays never, the stages pass;
All life is the play of the power that stirs
In the dance of my wanton worshippers.

5.

And the strong swift river my shrine below
It runs, like man, its unending course
To the boundless sea from eternal snow;
Mine is the Fountain—and mine the Force
That spurs all nature to ceaseless strife;
And my image is Death at the gates of Life.

6.

In many a legend and many a shape,
In the solemn grove and the crowded street,
I am the Slayer, whom none escape;
I am Death trod under a fair girl's feet;
I govern the tides of the sentient sea
That ebbs and flows to eternity.

7.

And the sum of the thought and the knowledge of man
Is the secret tale that my emblems tell;

Do ye seek God's purpose, or trace his plan?
Ye may read your doom in my parable:
For the circle of life in its flower and its fall
Is the writing that runs on my temple wall.

8.

O Race that labours, and seeks, and strives,
With thy Faith, thy wisdom, thy hopes and fears,
Where now is the Future of myriad lives?
Where now is the Creed of a thousand years?
Far as the Western spirit may range,
It finds but the travail of endless change;

9.

For the earth is fashioned by countless suns,
And planets wander, and stars are lost,
As the rolling flood of existence runs
From light to shadow, from fire to frost.

Your search is ended, ye hold the keys
Of my inmost ancient mysteries.

10.

Now that your hands have lifted the veil,
And the crowd may know what my symbols
mean,
Will not the faces of men turn pale
At the sentence heard, and the vision seen
Of strife and sleep, of the soul's brief hour,
And the careless tread of unyielding Power?

11.

Though the world repent of its cruel youth,
And in age grow soft, and its hard law
bend,
Ye may spare or slaughter; by rage or ruth
All forms speed on to the far still end;
For the gods who have mercy, who save or
bless,
Are the visions of man in his hopelessness.

12.

Let my temples fall, they are dark with age,
Let my idols break, they have stood their day;
On their deep hewn stones the primeval sage
Has figured the spells that endure alway;
My presence may vanish from river and grove,
But I rule for ever in Death and Love.

XVII.

LINES FROM THE GERMAN.

MUTE sleeps the singer; he whose ear
At gates of other worlds had listened oft,
His song rolled forth like mountain torrent near;
Or lulled, like far-off fountain murmuring soft.

Thou sleepest still, thou sleepest calm,
Though over thee the storm and zephyr blow;
The storm that swelled thy strain to war's alarm,
The breath, that in thy lay of love sighed low.

XVIII.

AMOR IN EXTREMIS.

A garrison story of a hundred years ago.

A LAUGH when I wanted a smile, a sting in
the honey of play,
A flout at my fustian jacket—and I left my
home that day;
Left all to go a-soldiering, and 'listed for the
war,
To sail to the far East Indies, and to see my
love no more.

But the frigates lay at anchor, and our time
was drawing nigh,
Her face was always haunting me, I'd never
said good-bye;

So I swam ashore one summer night, a mile
from ship to sand;
O the silvery play of the moonlit spray, and
the scent of the silent land!

I watched her cottage window till at dawn
the roses stirred;
I saw the casement open, I caught a whisper'd
word;
But who comes from the door below? I
started from my place,
And the captain of our company I met him
face to face.

I strode full front across his path; he bade
me stand aside,
Said he knew me a deserter; so I told him
that he lied;
Our fight was fair and open, for I struck
when he struck me,

And at last I left him lying with his head on
Lucy's knee.

Little care have I to pity him, who in the
cool grey light
In her arms lay there a-dying that had
clasped him all the night—
While to me the end comes wearily in prison
here alone,
For the dark hours pass me vainly, and at
sunrise I'll be gone.

Farewell to you, my comrades, and to-
morrow, when I'm shot,
To Lucy take this kerchief with her own true-
lover's-knot;
She'll be luring other sweethearts soon; she
knows the scarlet streak
Of two men's blood on her winsome head
will only flush her cheek.

She may weep for a space, and think of my face (she seemed now and then to love it)
All splintered through with a bullet or two, and a barrow of earth above it;
And perhaps I may sigh if I think, as I lie with a coffin for bed and room,
Of her chamber sweet, and the rustle of feet and Lucy in all her bloom.

Yet I'd rather stay six feet in clay, where the weeds and brambles grow,
Than be sitting aloft in cloudland, with the goods folks all in a row;
For I don't take a pride in my singing, nor parades with the heavenly host,
I'd sooner be left in the village to wander about like a ghost.

Like a ghost! But my love whom I died for—
O years of my life that are shorn,

O the odour of far-off summers, the glory of
days unborn!
Shall I still see the earth and its beauty, and
meet her by meadow or fell?
Alas! for the living know not, and the dead
men cannot tell.

The parson he says, 'To the Lord give praise,
you're ready and fit to depart;
Your repentance is sore, be troubled no more,
nor think of your frail sweetheart;
You'll soon be on high with the cherubs, so
get that girl from your head;
Talk no more about Lucy, her sins are as
scarlet red.'

Ah, but I want my darling, and her soul with
my own to deliver;
God must not be hard on my sweetheart, but
pardon, as I forgive her.

He gave her the face like an angel to drive
men to fury and woe,
And I can't lose her here and hereafter, so
whither she's sent I must go.

Let me go, with the Dead March beforehand,
to settle the score of our guilt;
No use looking back on a lost life, or crying
o'er blood that is spilt.
But will she live on to forget me? She's
fickle and soft as the wind;
I wish I had killed her also, for now I must
leave her behind.

XIX.

THE LAND OF REGRETS.

"Yea, they thought scorn of that pleasant land."
Psalms.

WHAT far-reaching Nemesis steered him
From his home by the cool of the sea?
When he left the fair country that reared him,
When he left her, his mother, for thee,
That restless, disconsolate worker
Who strains now in vain at thy nets,
O sultry and sombre Noverca!
O Land of Regrets!

What lured him to life in the tropic?
Did he venture for fame or for pelf?
Did he seek a career philanthropic?
Or simply to better himself?

But whate'er the temptation that brought him,
Whether piety, dulness, or debts,
He is thine for a price, thou hast bought him,
O Land of Regrets!

He did list to the voice of a siren,
He was caught by the clinking of gold,
And the slow toil of Europe seemed tiring,
And the grey of his fatherland cold;
He must haste to the gardens of Circe;
What ails him, the slave, that he frets
In thy service? O Lady *sans merci!*
O Land of Regrets!

From the East came the breath of its odours
And its heat melted soft in the haze,
While he dimly descried thy pagodas,
O Cybele, ancient of days;
Heard the hum of thy mystic processions
The echo of myriads who cry,

And the wail of their vain intercessions,
Through the bare empty vault of the sky.

Did he read of the lore of thy sages?
Of thy worship by mountain and flood?
Did he muse o'er thy annals? the pages
All blotted with treason and blood;
Thy chiefs and thy dynasties reckon?
Thy armies—he saw them come forth
O'er the wide stony wolds of the Dekhan,
O'er the cities and plains of the North.

He was touched with the tales of our glory,
He was stirred by the clash and the jar
Of the nations who kill *con amore*
The fury of races at war;
'Mid the crumbling of royalties rotting
Each cursed by a knave or a fool,
Where kings and fanatics are plotting,
He dreamt of a power and a rule;

Hath he come now, in season, to know thee;
Hath he seen, what a stranger forgets,
All the graveyards of exiles below thee,
O Land of Regrets?

Has he learnt how thy honours are rated?
Has he cast his accounts in thy school?
With the sweets of authority sated,
Would he give up his throne to be cool,
Doth he curse Oriental romancing,
And wish he had toiled all his day,
At the Bar, or the Banks, or financing,
And got damned in a common-place way?

Thou hast racked him with duns and diseases,
And he lies, as thy scorching winds blow,
Recollecting old England's sea breezes
On his back in a lone bungalow;
At the slow coming darkness repining
How he girds at the sun till it sets,

As he marks the long shadows declining
O'er the Land of Regrets.

Let him cry, as thy blue devils seize him,
O step-mother, careless as Fate,
He may strive from thy bonds to release him,
Thou hast passed him his sentence—Too
Late;
He has found what a blunder his youth is,
His prime what a struggle, and yet
Has to learn of old age what the truth is
In the Land of Regret.

XX.

SEQUEL TO "MY QUEEN."

"When and where shall I earliest meet her, &c., &c."

YES, but the years run circling fleeter,
Ever they pass me—I watch, I wait—
Ever I dream, and awake to meet her;
She cometh never, or comes too late.

Should I press on? for the day grows shorter—
Ought I to linger? the far end nears;
Ever ahead have I looked, and sought her
On the bright sky line of the gathering years

Now that the shadows are eastward sloping,
As I screen mine eyes from the slanting sun,
Cometh a thought—It is past all hoping,
Look not ahead, she is missed and gone.

Here on the ridge of my upward travel
Ere the life line dips to the darkening vales,
Sadly I turn, and would fain unravel
The entangled maze of a search that fails.

When and where have I seen and passed her?
What are the words I forgot to say?
Should we have met had a boat rowed faster?
Should we have loved, had I stayed that day?

Was it her face that I saw, and started,
Gliding away in a train that crossed?
Was it her form that I once, faint-hearted,
Followed awhile in a crowd and lost?

Was it there she lived, when the train went sweeping
Under the moon through the landscape hushed?
Somebody called me, I woke from sleeping,
Saw but a hamlet—and on we rushed.

Listen and linger—She yet may find me
In the last faint flush of the waning light—
Never a step on the path behind me;
I must journey alone, to the lonely night.

But is there somewhere on earth, I wonder,
A fading figure, with eyes that wait,
Who says, as she stands in the distance yonder,
'He cometh never, or comes too late?'

XXI.

A NIGHT IN THE RED SEA.

THE strong hot breath of the land is lashing
The wild sea-horses, they rear and race;
The plunging bows of our ship are dashing
Full in the fiery south wind's face.

She rends the water, it foams and follows,
And the silvery jet of the towering spray,
And the phosphor sparks in the deep wave hollows,
Lighten the line of our midnight way.

The moon above, with its full-orbed lustre,
Lifting the veil of the slumberous land,
Gleams o'er a desolate island cluster,
And the breakers white on the lonely sand.

And a bare hill-range in the distance frowning
Dim wrapt in haze like a shrouded ghost,
With its jagged peaks the horizon crowning,
Broods o'er the stark Arabian coast.

See, on the edge of the waters leaping,
The lamp, far flashing, of Perim's strait
Glitters and grows, as the ship goes sweeping
Fast on its course for the Exile's Gate.[1]

And onward still to the broadening ocean
Out of the narrow and perilous seas,
Till we rock with a large and listless motion
In the moist soft air of the Indian breeze.

And the Southern Cross, like a standard flying,
Hangs in the front of the tropic night,
But the Great Bear sinks, like a hero dying,
And the Pole-star lowers its signal light;

[1] Báb el Mandeb.

And the round earth rushes toward the morning,
And the waves grow paler and wan the foam,
Misty and dim, with a glance of warning,
Vanish the stars of my northern home.

Let the wide waste sea for a space divide me,
Till the close-coiled circles of time unfold,
Till the stars rise westward to greet and guide me,
When the exile ends, and the years are told.

XXII.

CHARLES'S WAIN.

To a Child.

"By this the Northerne wagoner had set
His sevenfold teme behind the stedfast starre
That was in Ocean waves yet never wet,
But firme is fixt, and sendeth light from farre
To all who in the wide deepe wandering arre—"
Faerie Queene.

IN the early spring, as the nights grow shorter,
Some clear cold eve when the clouds are high,
Just as you're going to bed, my daughter,
Linger, and look at the northern sky;

There you will see, if the stars you're wise in,
Over the edge of the darkened plain

One by one in the heavens uprising
The seven bright beacons of Charles's Wain.

All the night long you may watch them turning,
Round in their course by the polar star;
Slowly they sink and at dawn are burning
Low on the line of the world afar.

Often they guide me, by dim tracks wending,
In the evenings late, to an Indian tent,
Or the stars, as I wake, are to earth descending;
Just as they touch it, the night is spent.

Then, as they dip, I may take their warning,
Saddle and ride in the silent air;
Swiftly they vanish, and cometh the morning,
Cometh the day with its noise and glare.

But the Wain's last lustre fitfully glances
O'er shadowy camels, who softly pace,
On the watchman's fire, and the horsemen's lances,
Or a wayside mere with a still wan face.

Thus, when you look at the seven stars yonder
Think, nor in years that will come, forget,
Here in the dark how often I wander,
Sleep when they rise, and start as they set.

In the West there is clanging of clocks from the steeple,
Ringing of bells and rushing of train;
In the East the journeys of simple people
Are timed and lighted by Charles's Wain

XXIII.

THE MONK AND THE BIRD.

In a valley encircled by endless wood
Silent and sombre a convent stood;
In front a garden; beyond the pale
The forest spread over hill and dale,
And its paths were seldom trod.

One summer evening of ages gone
A grey monk worked in the garden alone
Heavily turning the deep clay soil;
And his breath came hard with the straining toil
As he prayed aloud to God;

"Alas," cried he, "for the path is steep
"And the goal is far and the slow hours creep;

"When shall I finish the tale of my years
"Of days in silence and nights in tears
"And come to my promised rest?"

He lifted his face to the comforting sky
And he saw where sat in a tree hard by
A bird whose plumes like the rainbow shone,
It sang three notes with a silvery tone;
And as if to a new-built nest

Over the garden he saw it flit
Into the forest; and there it lit;
Again in the leaves its song he heard;
He was fain to follow the beautiful bird,
And he entered the woodland maze;

The bird flew slowly from bough to bough
Up the valley side to the low hill's brow;
From the spreading beech on the mossy
bank

To the willow weeping o'er marsh pools
dank
He could but follow and gaze.

Ever it fluttered above his head,
Ever he looked and was lingering led
Through grassy glades and tangled woods
Deep into shady solitudes
Of many a fern clad hollow.

For he thought that a bird so rich and rare
Never had floated on summer air,
He could not lose it, he needs must roam
It seemed to beckon and bid him come,
He could not choose but follow.

At last on a wych elm, gnarled and grey,
As the monk drew nearer, it seemed to stay,
Then spread its wings for a sudden flight
Over the tree-tops, out of his sight;
And he turned back drearily.

He reached his garden in twilight dim,
The trees looked gaunt and the convent grim,
He rang at the gate as vesper tolled
And the porter opened it, blind and old,
And he entered wearily.

But the hall had suffered a secret change;
With unknown faces and accent strange
The monks rose up as they heard his name,
They asked his errand and whence he came;
And he told them his tale forlorn.

Some counted their beads, one muttered a prayer,
He knew not why they should gather and stare,
He stood in the midst like one distraught,
And the friendly voices in vain he sought
Of the freres he had left that morn.

At last came the Abbot, aged and bent;
He scanned his features with eyes intent;
And he cried, "Be it he or his wandering ghost
"'Tis the face of the monk in the forest lost
"Some forty summers agone!

"Is he roaming still, though the mass was said
"And the requiem sung for a brother dead?
"Does he dream he has rambled this livelong day?
"'Tis two score years since he vanished away"—
But the monk gave answer none,

Save only he said, "Have I journeyed so long?
"Welcome at last is the evensong;
"Let me take the sleep I have earned so well"—

And he died that night in his ancient cell,
And the brethren closed his eyes.

So his prayer was granted; from youth to age
God shortened the term of his pilgrimage;
The sad years passed like a day's sunlight,
And the sweet-voiced bird with the plumage bright
Was a Bird of Paradise.

XXIV.

TRANSLATIONS FROM HORACE.

I.—AEQUAM MEMENTO REBUS IN ARDUIS—

Lib. II., Ode III.

KEEP up your spirits in grief, my friend,
And an equal temper, if luck runs low:
When times grow better and fortunes mend,
Don't be too ready to chuckle and crow;
For whether you swelter the live-long day
Toiling under an Indian sun,
Or whether you lie amid English hay
Drinking the summer hours away—
What will it matter?—when life is done.

When the spreading beech, and the poplar tall
Join their boughs o'er a shady nook,

Just when the slanting waterfall
Hurries the flow of the gliding brook,
Carry my wine to that cool green bower,
Light me a leaf of choice Manille,
Cull me the rose which blooms for an hour,
While lasts our money, and life's young flower,
While the Fates still pity and spare us still.

Soon you must leave your favourite wold,
And the pleasant villa by Isis laved,
And the heir will reckon your piles of gold,
Hardly won, and thriftily saved.
Be you a wretched labouring kerne
Or a Baron rich with a blazoned coat,
Soon as your lot is drawn from the urn
Go you must—there is no return,
When you have stepped into Charon's boat.

II.—Septimi Gades aditure mecum.

Hor., Lib. II., Ode VI.

The Return from Furlough.

Charley—it's time that we were away,
Well I know you will come with me,
We must be tossing in Biscay's Bay,
Cross the desert, and steam away
Down the Gulf to the Indian Sea.

Ah! that hamlet in Saxon Kent—
Shall I find it when I come home,
With toil and travelling well nigh spent,
Tired with life in jungle and tent,
Eastward never again to roam?

Pleasantest corner the world can show,
In a vale which slopes to the English sea;
Where strawberries wild in the woodland grow,

And the cherry-tree branches are bending low,
No such fruit in the South countree.

Winter melting in spring sunshine,
Flowering hops in the autumn vale;
Little care we for the trailing vine,
Mightier drink than Gascon wine
Foams in the tankard of Kentish ale.

Shelter for me, and for you, my friend,
There let us settle when both are old,
And whenever I come to my journey's end
There you shall see me laid, and blend
Just one tear with the falling mould.

III.—O SAEPE MECUM TEMPUS IN ULTIMUM.

Lib. II., Ode VII.

Furlough, 1861.

AH Frank, with whom often reclining
Under canvas at close of the day,
In a very loose uniform dining,
I have drank the short twilight away.

With whom through those perilous shindies
I rode in the days of old Clyde—
What has brought you at last from the Indies,
To your country and own fire-side?

'Twas with you that I bolted from Delhi,
When our soldiers joined arms with the foe,
And, basely shot down in the *melée*,
The best of our mess were laid low:

But saved by kind Fate from the shooting, I
  Was sent from the battle-field far,
While you the high flood tide of mutiny
  Swept off down the torrent of war.

Then a banquet in honour preparing,
  'Tis meet that we gratefully dine;
Come, rest your worn limbs this armchair in,
  And try just a glass of this wine.

We'll drown all our sorrows in claret,
  In balmy care-soothing Lafitte,
(I have broached it for you, so don't spare it,)
  And a thimble of *eau-de-vie* neat.

Let propriety go to the devil,
  Be Anonyma queen of the feast—
I can't see the harm of a revel,
  With a friend who is home from the East.

IV.—Eheu! fugaces, Posthume, Posthume!

Hor., Lib. II., Ode XIV.

Alas, old friend, that each year
Of our life is rapidly flying!
No charity softens the sentence drear
Of wrinkles, and age, and dying.

You may fill with gold the church plate
Each Sabbath-day morn in the portal,
You can never appease remorseless Fate,
Who laughs at the tears of a mortal.

Monarchs and warriors stout,
She holds them all in her tether,
So whether you now be a lord or a lout,
We must travel that road together.

A prince of lofty birth,
Or a half-starved labouring slave,

You've had your share of the bountiful earth,
You'll both be one in the grave.

In vain you keep clear of your foes,
Are cautious in crossing the Channel,
Stay at home when the piercing east wind blows,
And wrap up your chest in flannel.

You must go from your hall and estate,
Of your loving wife they'll bereave you;
They may plant some yew at the sepulchre gate,
But that will be all they'll leave you.

The heir will inherit your keys,
And deep from the bins he'll fish up
The Madeira you thought to drink at your ease,
And port laid down for the Bishop.

CHISWICK PRESS :—C. WHITTINGHAM AND CO.,
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